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BLUEBEARD

BLUEBEARD

A MUSICAL FANTASY

BY

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

HEREIN LIES THE STORY OF THE MIRACULOUS DISCOVERY IN A HAT BOX OF AN UNPUBLISHED OPERA BY THE LATE RICHARD WAGNER, DEALING IN THE MOST UNIQUE AND CLIMACTERIC MANNER WITH FEMINISM, TRIAL MARRIAGE, BIGAMY AND POLYGAMY; ITS LIBRETTO AND LEIT-MOTIVE HAVE BEEN STUDIED WITH PASSION AND ARE NOW REVEALED WITH RELIGIOUS ZEAL

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A-O

To my friend
Walter Damrosch
Master of the art form
so irreverently treated
in these pages.

Kate Douglas Wiggin

PREFACE

More than a dozen years ago musical scholars and critics began to illuminate the musical darkness of New York with lecture-recitals explanatory of the more abstruse German operas. Previous to this era no one had ever thought, for instance, of unfolding the story, or the "*Leit motive*" (if there happened to be any!), in "The Bohemian Girl," "Maritana," or "Martha." These and many other delightful but thoroughly third-class works unfolded themselves as they went along, to the entire satisfaction of a public so unbelievably care-free, happy, thoughtless, childlike, unin-

structed, that it hardly seems as if they could have been our ancestors.

Wagner changed all this at a single blow. One could no longer leave one's brains with one's hat in the coat-room when the "Nibelungen Ring" appeared! Learned critics, pitifully comprehending the fathomless ignorance of the people, began to give lectures on the "Ring" to large audiences, mostly of ladies, through whom in course of time a certain amount of information percolated and reached the husbands—the somewhat circuitous, but only possible method by which æsthetic knowledge can be conveyed to the American male. Women are hopeless idealists! It is not enough for them that their brothers or husbands should pay for the seats at the opera and accompany them

there, clad in irreproachable evening dress. Not at all! They wish them to sit erect, keep awake, and look intelligent, and it is but just to say that many of them succeed in doing so. The art-form known as the lecture-recital, then, has succeeded in forcibly educating so large a section of the public that immense audiences gather at the Metropolitan Opera House, one-half of them at least, in a state of such chastened susceptibility and erudition that the Tetralogy of Wagner has no terrors for them.

The next move was in behalf of the more cryptic, symbolic, hectic, toxic works of the ultra-modern French school, which have been so brilliantly illuminated by their protagonists that thousands of women in the larger cities recognize a mas-

ter's voice whenever one of his themes is played upon the Victrola.

I shall offer my practically priceless manuscript of "Bluebeard" for production in French at the Metropolitan, and in English at the Century Opera House; meantime Mr. Hammerstein is so impressed with its originality, audacity, and tragic power that he is laying the corner-stone for a magnificent new building and will open and close it with "Bluebeard" in German, if no unforeseen legal complications should prevent.

It is in preparation for all this activity that I issue this brief but epoch-making little work.

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN.

NEW YORK, *February, 1914.*

BLUEBEARD

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Bluebeard (*baritone*). Man of enormous wealth but dubious morals. Pioneer of the trial-marriage idea.

Fatima (*singing actress*). Innocent, romantic, frivolous blonde type, rich in personal charm, weak in logic and a poor judge of men.

Sister Anne (*soprano*). Impulsive, magnetic, ambitious, highly marriageable brunette.

The Mother (*contralto*). Impecunious, mercenary widow, determined to settle her daughters in life without any regard to eugenic principles.

Mustapha (*robust tenor*). Elder brother; the one who has the fat acting part since he rescues Fatima and slays Bluebeard.

Other Brothers (*falsettos*). Of no account save to show the size of the family to which Fatima belongs and her mother's sound convictions on the subject of race suicide. The other brothers have nothing to do except to slay sheep (by accident) when attempting to destroy Bluebeard's tiger and elephant.

The Tiger (*throaty baritone*). Comic character.

The Elephant
The Dragon } *basses* { Introduced simply as corroborative detail.

Chorus of Bluebeard's Vassals (*baritones and basses*).

Chorus of Headless Wives (*sopranos and contraltos*).

Chorus of Sheep (*tenors*).

BLUEBEARD

(LECTURE-RECITAL)

WE are proceeding on the supposition that this music-drama of "Bluebeard" is a posthumous work of Richard Wagner. It is said (our authority being a late number of the musical and Court Journal, *Die Fliegende Blätter*) that a housemaid, while tidying one of the rooms in a villa formerly occupied by the Wagner family in summer, perceived an enormous halo shining persistently over a certain bedstead standing against the wall, the said halo absolutely refusing to remove itself when attacked with a feather-

duster. The housemaid thought at first that it was simply an effect of the sunlight, but observed subsequently that the halo was just as large, fine yellow, opaque, and circular on dark days as on bright ones; consequently, on a certain morning when it was so huge and glaring as to be positively offensive to the eye, inasmuch as it did not hang over a Holy Family, but over an ordinary and somewhat uncomfortable article of furniture, she adopted the courageous feminine expedient of looking underneath the bed, where she found this priceless legacy of the master reposing in a hat-box in which it had lain for nearly half a century, unsuspected, undisturbed.

If this incident is true it is exquisitely pretty and touching; if not, it is highly absurd and ridiculous, but the

same may be said of many hypothetical historical incidents. At all events, the financial arrangements which followed upon the discovery of the MS. and the price demanded for it by the Wagnerian housemaid convinces me absolutely of its authenticity.

To me it is not strange that Wagner should choose to immortalize the story of Bluebeard, for the interesting and inspiring myth has been used in all ages and in all countries. It differs slightly in the various versions. In some, the shade of the villain's beard is robin's-egg and in others indigo; in some the fatal key is blood-stained instead of broken; while in the matter of wives the myth varies according to the customs of the locality where it appears. In monogamous

countries the number of ladies slain is generally six, but in bigamous and polygamous countries the interesting victims mount (they were always hung high, you remember) to the number of one hundred and seventeen.

I ought, perhaps, to confess to you that there are critics who still deny the authenticity of this work, although they concede that it is full of Wagner's spirit and influence and may have been produced by some ardent follower or pupil; one steeped to the eyebrows in mythologic lore and capable of hurling titanic tonal eccentricities against the uncomprehending ear-drum of the dull and ignorant herd. There are those, too, who think that some disciple of Richard II.,—Strauss, not Wagner,—had a hand in

the orchestration, simply because his "Sinfonia Domestica" occupies itself with the same sweet history of the inglenook which is the basis of the Bluebeard libretto. Strauss's symphony is worked out along more tranquil lines, to be sure, but it is only the history of a single day of married life and a day arbitrarily chosen by the composer. It is conceivable that there may have been other days!

The incredulous ones urge that Wagner would never have been drawn to the Bluebeard myth as a foundation for a libretto; but for myself I regard its selection as a probable reaction, violent, no doubt, from the composition of Parsifal. In Parsifal the central themes and the unavoidable conclusion are de-

rived from outgrown beliefs that have long since ceased to influence the heart of mankind. Parsifal is medieval, mystic, rapt, devout. Its ideals are those of celibacy and asceticism, the products of an age whose theories and practices as regards sex-relationships can have no echo in modern civilization. What more natural than that Wagner should fling himself, for mental and emotional relief, into a story throbbing with human love and marriage? Neither would some calm domestic drama serve, some story of the nursery or hearthstone, dealing with the relations of one fond husband and father, one doting mother and child. As a contrast to the asceticism and celibacy of Parsifal we have in Bluebeard rampant and tropical polygamy; fervent, untiring

connubialism. The ardent and susceptible Solomon might have been a more dignified hero, one would think; but, although he could furnish wives enough to properly fill the stage, his domestic life was not nearly as varied, as thrilling, and as upset as Bluebeard's, whose story makes a well-nigh invincible appeal to manager, artists, and subscribers alike; and, for that matter, is as likely to be popular with box-holders as with the gallery-gods.

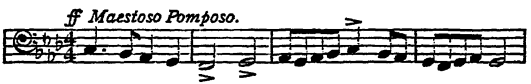
This master work enunciates the world law that Woman (symbolized by Fatima, Seventh Wife, singing actress) is determined to marry once at any cost; and that Man (symbolized by Bluebeard, baritone) is determined, if he marries at all, to marry as thoroughly and as often as possible.

It holds up to scorn the marriage of ambition and convenience on the one hand, but on the other, pursues with wrath and vengeance the law-breaker, the indiscriminate love-winner, the wife-collector and wife-slayer; and, although women still have a strange and persistent fancy for marriage, they might sometimes avoid it if they realized that a violent death were the price.

We must first study the musical construction of the overture with which the music-drama opens, as it is well known that Wagner in his Preludes prepares the spectator's mind for the impressions that are to follow. Several of the leading motives appear in this *Vorspiel* and must be appreciated to be understood. First we have the "*Blaubart motiv*" (Bluebeard

Motive). This is a theme whose giant march gives us in rhythmic thunders the terrible power of the hero.

Blaubart Motiv

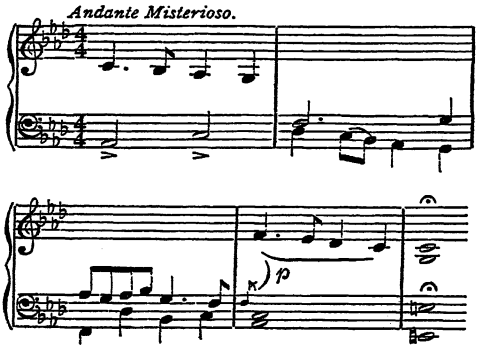


The "*Blaubart motiv*" should be constantly kept in mind, as it is a clue to much of the later action, being introduced whenever Bluebeard budges an inch from his doorstep. We do not hear in it the majestic grandeur of the Wotan or Walsungen motifs, and why? Simply because it was not intended to illustrate godlike power, but *brute force.*

Now if this were all, we had no more to say; but listen!

BLUEBEARD

Immer-wieder-heirathen Motiv



What does this portend—this entrance of another theme, written for the treble clef, played with the right hand, but mysteriously interwoven with the bass? What but that Bluebeard is not to be the sole personage in this music-drama; and we judge the stranger to be a female on account of the overwhelming circumstantial evidence just given.

BLUEBEARD

Bluebeard, when first introduced—you remember the movement, one of somber grandeur leading upward to vague desire—was alone and lonely. Certainly the first, probably the second. If his mood were that of settled despair, typical of a widower determined never to marry again no matter what the provocation, the last note of the phrase would have been projected *downward;* but, as you must have perceived, the melody terminates in a tone of something like hope. There is no assurance in it—do not misunderstand me; there is no particular lady projected in the musical text—that would have been indelicate, for we do not know at the moment precisely the date when Bluebeard hung up his last wife; but there *is* a groping discontent. At the opening

of the drama we have not been informed whether Bluebeard has ever been married at all or only a few times, but we feel that he craves companionship, and we know when we hear this "*Immer-wieder-heirathen Motiv*" (Always About to Marry Again Motive) that he secures it. The sex created expressly to furnish companionship will go on doing so, even if it has to be hung up in the process.

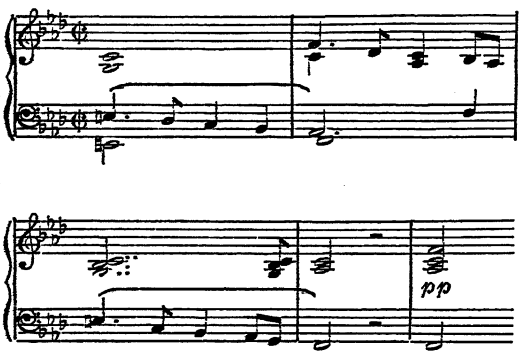
Look again at the second theme, the "*Immer-wieder-heirathen Motiv*" (Always About to Marry Again Motive). Do you note a mysterious reflection of the first theme in it? Certainly; it would be evident even to a chattering opera-party of the highest social circles. But why *is* this, asks the sordid American business man, who goes to the music-drama abso-

lutely unfitted in mind and body to solve its great psychological questions. Not because Wagner could not have evolved a dozen *Leit-Motive* for every measure, but for a more exquisitely refined and subtle reason. The wife is often found to be more or less a reflection of her husband, especially in Germany, therefore an entirely new and original motive would have been out of place. It is this extraordinary insight into the human mind which brings us to the feet of the master in reverential awe; and it detracts nothing from his fame that his themes descriptive of average femininity would have been quite different had he written them for the women of this epoch. The world moves rapidly.

This motive slips with a series of

imperceptible musical glides into the "*Siebente-Frau Motiv*" (Seventh Wife Motive): Bluebeard enters well in advance; Fatima, contrapuntally obedient, coming in a little behind.

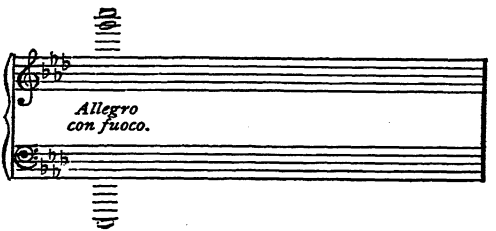
Siebente-Frau Motiv



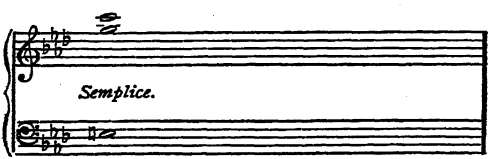
This Fatima, or Seventh Wife Motive seems to be written in a curiously low key if we conceive it to be the

index to the character of a soprano heroine; but let us look further. What are the two principal personages in the music-drama to be to each other?

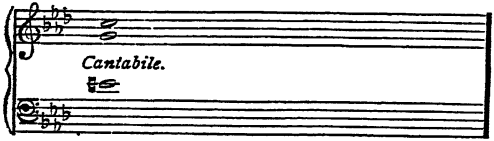
If *enemies*, the phrase would have been written thus:



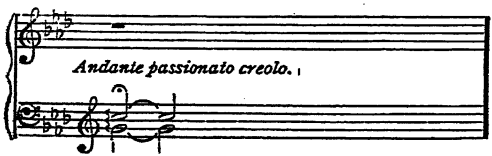
If *acquaintances*, thus:



If *friends*, thus:



If *lovers*, thus:



the ardent and tropical treble note leaving its own proper sphere and nestling cozily down in the bass staff.

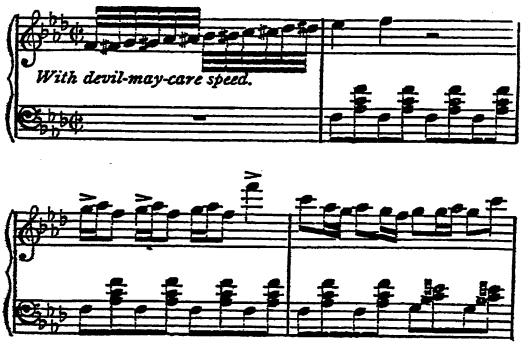
But the hero and heroine of the music-drama were husband and wife; therefore the phrases are intertwined sufficiently for propriety, but not too closely for pleasure. We might also say, considering Fatima's probable fate, that we cannot wonder that she

sings in a low key; and the exceedingly involved contrapuntal complications in which the motive terminates hint perhaps at Wagner's opinion on the momentous question, "Is marriage a failure?"

Next we have the "*Bruder Hoch zu Ross Motiv*" (Brothers on a High Horse Motive), announced by sparkling Tetrazzini chromatics, always at sixes and sevens, darting and dashing, centaur-like, in semi-demi-quavers, like horses' manes and tails mounting skyward, whinnyingly. Fatima's brothers have come to make a wedding visit to their beloved sister, whom they believe happily united to a nobleman of high degree. They have also come because in a music-drama action is demanded and choruses are desirable; being noisy,

impressive, popular, comparatively cheap, and the participants less temperamental in character than soloists, therefore more easily managed.

Bruder Hoch zu Ross Motiv



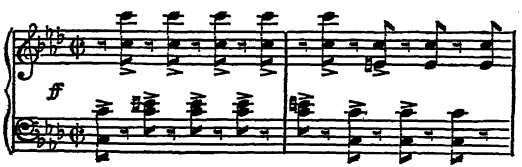
If you miss some of the wonderful sinuosity, some of the musical curvatures of the similar "Horses in a Hurry Motive" in "Die Walküre," I can only suggest that the Brothers'

mounts were not as the fleet steeds of the gods. Fatima's people were living in genteel poverty, and the family horses were doubtless somewhat emaciated; therefore the musical realist could not in honesty depict them other than in an angular rather than curved movement.

The overture next takes up the arrival of the Brothers, who, as the music plainly assures us, dismount, feed their steeds, perform a simple toilette at the stable-yard pump, and then come suddenly upon Bluebeard, whose frenzy for disposing of fresh wives is as sudden and as all-absorbing as his desire to annex them. At the moment of the Brothers' opportune arrival Bluebeard is on the point of severing Fatima's relations with the world. The Brothers advance. A

cloud of dust envelops them; they rush forward, dealing telling blows, and the frantic bleating of fleeing sheep is heard in a wild double-tonguing of the united brass instruments, very effective, especially in the open air, though a little trying to nervous ladies in the front rows of an opera-house. This is the celebrated "*Kilkennische Katzen Motiv*" (Motive of Mortal Combat). It is a syncopated movement, and when given at the piano, is to be played furiously, first with one hand and then with the other, till the performer is quite weary.

Kilkennische Katzen Motiv



ad infinitum, until one is deceased.

We find all through these measures most peculiar phrases, introduced by half-formed musical rhythms, which are a presentiment of the mental unrest and nervous prostration of Fatima, who does not know whether Bluebeard will kill the Brothers or the Brothers will kill Bluebeard. She has never been an opera-goer and does not realize that there are inexorable laws in these matters and that the villain always dies; that he agrees in his contract to die, no matter how healthy he may be, no matter how much he dislikes it nor how slight the provocation. However, this scene is made notable by the famous "Suspense Motive," one hundred and seventeen bars of doubt given by the big brasses and contra-bassoons.

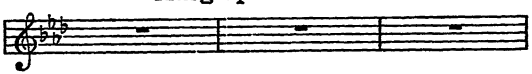
There is much in this sort of

programme music that is not easily intelligible to a young man who, having purchased an admission ticket, is wandering from back to back of one opera-box after another; but when fully comprehended, these special phrases are replete with emotion and insight. Several motives are so dexterously woven into one gush of melody that they cannot be disentangled by any ordinary method, and have to be wrenched apart by the enthusiast, who employs, when milder means fail, a sort of intellectual dynamite to extricate the meaning from the score. With the aid of this lecture, which is better than an ear-trumpet and a magnifying-glass, we can, however, trace a "*Schwert Motiv*" (Sword Motive), showing the weapons used in the combat; the "*Glück-*

seligkeit Motiv" (Felicity Motive), well named, for we must remember that Fatima is witnessing the duel from the castle window, her heart beating high at the prospect of widowhood; and, toward the end, the famous "*Ausgespielt Motiv*" (Motive of Spent Strength and Spilled Blood).

Glückseligkeit Motiv

Ausgespielt Motiv

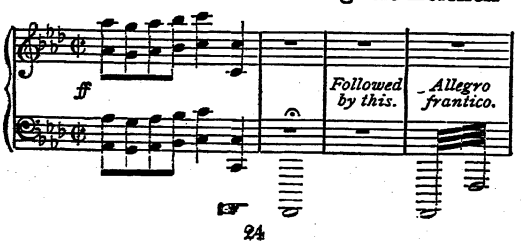


The "*Ausgespielt Motiv*" is written in four flats, but as a matter of fact only one person is flat, *viz.:* Bluebeard, who has just been slain by Mustapha. The other three flats must refer to the sheep accidentally hit by

the younger brothers, who aim for Bluebeard, but miss him, being indifferent marksmen.

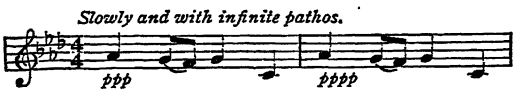
Why does the union of these *motive*, "*Bruder Hoch zu Ross*" (Brothers on a High Horse), "*Kilkennische Katzen*" (Mortal Combat), "*Schwert*" (Sword), "*Glückseligkeit*" (Felicity of Fatima), and "*Ausgespielt*" (Spent Strength and Spilled Blood), when blended in one majestically discordant whole, produce upon us a feeling of profound grief mingled with hysterical mirth?

Ensemble Motiv
Blaubart-Schwert-Glückseligkeit-Leichen



And why do the measures grow more and more sad as they melt into the touching "*Blut auf dem Mond Motiv*" (Blood-on-the-Moon Motive)?

Blut auf dem Mond Motiv

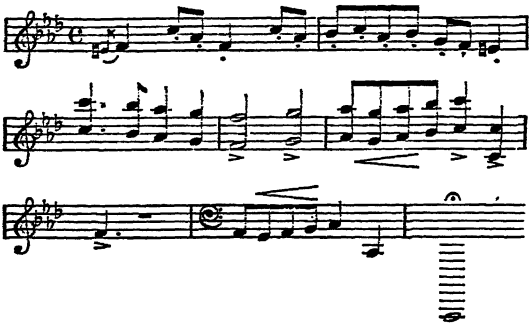


Simply because in a mortal combat somebody is invariably wounded and sometimes killed. Wagner sang of human life as it is, not as it might, could, would, or should be.

From the "*Blut auf dem Mond Motiv*" (Blood-on-the-Moon Motive) we glide at once into a dirge, the "*Leichen*," or Corpse, Motive, one of those superb funeral marches with which we are familiar in the other music-dramas of Wagner; for the master, though not

an Irishman, is never so happy as on these funeral occasions.

Leichen Motiv

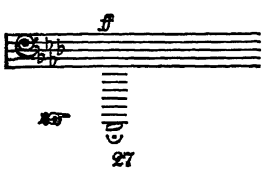


If any brainless and bigoted box-holder should ask why the "*Blaubart Motiv*" is repeated in this funeral march, I ask him in return how he expects otherwise to know who is killed? Will he take the trouble to reflect that these are the motives of the *Vorspiel*, and that the curtain has not yet risen on the music-drama?

But why, he asks, do we hear an undercurrent of mirth pulsating joyously through the prevailing sadness of this "*Leichen Motiv*," or funeral march? Simply because we cannot be expected to feel the same unmixed grief at the death of a wife-murderer as at the death of a wife-preserver! Ah, where shall we find again so subtle a reading of the throbbing heart of humanity!

The "*Schwert Motiv*" mingles again with the haunting strains of the half-sad, half-glad "*Leichen Motiv*," until the *Vorspiel* ends abruptly with a single note of ineffable meaning, thus:

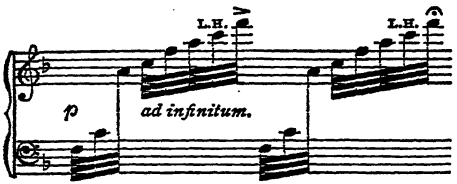
Tod und Hölle Motiv



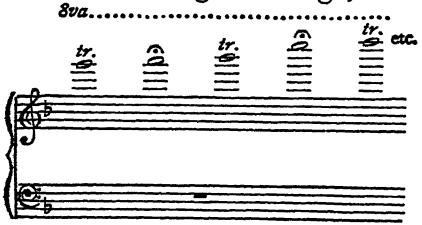
This is very interesting to the student, and means much, if it means anything. The sword of the elder brother, Mustapha, has gone through Bluebeard, if not the swords of the other Brothers. This, you say, might not have been necessarily fatal, since those hardy ruffians of a bygone age were proof against many a stab; but in this case the sword of the heroic Mustapha was accompanied by the killing "*Schwert Motiv*," consequently the villain is dead.

But what has become of him? We have the one clue only, which will be known by all students in future as the "*Tod und Hölle Motiv*," just given above: Bluebeard has gone where we will not follow him unless we are obliged. Is this asserting too much? Alas, it is only too evident. If it had been Wagner's intention to refer to

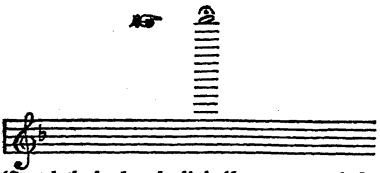
the glorious immortality of a godlike hero, we should have had the exquisite strains of a heavenly harp, thus:



or the whir of angels' wings, thus:



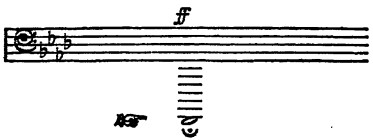
And a final significant note, thus:



(Stretch the keyboard a little if necessary and play a half, if there is not room for a whole note.)

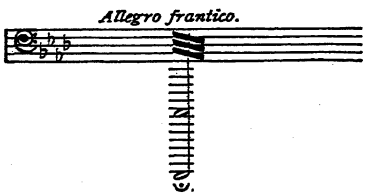
whose piercing sweetness and dizzy altitude would have symbolized Heaven, or at least *Walhalla.*

Alas, it is all too plain. We have this:



enough in itself to show his whereabouts; and as if that were not enough, this:

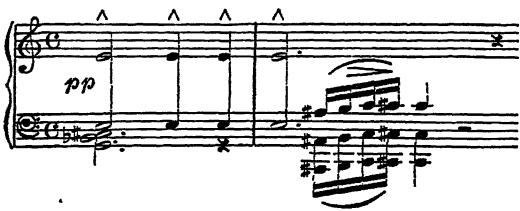
Verdammungs Motiv



to show that he is uncomfortable!

It will be interesting for the student

to note the difference between the "*Verdammungs Motiv*" of "Bluebeard" and the "Damnation Motive" of Wagner's earlier opera, "Tannhäuser."



Both are strong, tragic, and powerful, but the sins of Bluebeard are gross and those of Tannhäuser subtle; consequently the peril of each is foreshadowed in its own way, it being very clear that Bluebeard's fate is final, while Tannhäuser, as we know, is saved by the spiritual influence of Elizabeth, a very different lady

indeed from the frivolous and mercenary Fatima.

The plot of this music-drama itself is made beautifully clear by this *Vorspiel* and lecture-recital, so that even a mother and child at a matinée can follow the tone-pictures without difficulty; but the libretto, which is a remarkable specimen of Wagner's alliterative verse, only helps the more to rivet attention and compel admiration. I have given you an idea of the brief overture, and the opera itself opens with a somber recitative, descriptive or symbolic of the Dark Ages of Juvenile Literature.

BLUEBEARD

Recitative

"*The Dark Ages of Juvenile Literature do not afford a chronicle of greater atrocity!*

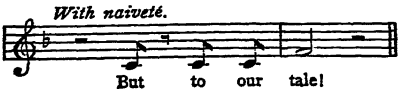
"*Than that furnished by a very glum, grim, gruesome, gory, but connubially-minded gentleman, whose ugly blue beard was a perfect monstrosity!*

"*He also had an unfortunate predilection for leading unattached ladies to the altar, constantly marrying wives, six wives, successively, one after another, on a regular railroad of matrimonial velocity!*

"*But, finding them* in toto, *all very so-so, determined to turn each one of them into a good woman by cutting off her head!*

"*As a punishment for the most*

unmitigatedly determined and persevering female curiosity!"



The "tale" introduces the lovely, luckless Fatima, sitting at her cottage window, dreaming the dreams of girlhood. She has received Bluebeard's message of love, and is awaiting his coming as the hero of her heart's romance. This "*Traum*" theme is almost precisely like the "Guileless Fool Motive" of "Parsifal," and the application to Fatima is unmistakable.

ARIA

"*Within sight of his castle, a short hour's ride,*
"*An impecunious old lady lived,*

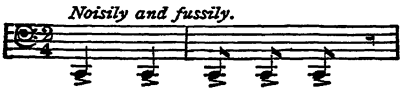
two marriageable and impecunious daughters beside,
"Whom Bluebeard had seen and at love's highest pitch
"Sent to say he would marry, he didn't care which!
"Sent to say he would marry, he didn't care which!"

We now have Bluebeard's triumphal journey toward Fatima's cottage, from whence he is to bring her as his bride.

If this brutal bigamist had any preference it was for Anne, Fatima's younger sister, but he knew that it was only a matter of a few weeks anyway, so there is not the slightest hint in the music of anything but the tempered joy with which the accustomed bridegroom approaches the familiar altar.

BLUEBEARD

We have the "*Blaubart Motiv*" again here, and we must not be disturbed to find it heralded thus:



We find the same thing later on. This is merely an introductory phrase, the "*Losgehenlassen Motiv*" (See Me Getting Ready to Go Motive). Here we note Wagner's sublime regard for truth and realism. Does Bluebeard go—does anybody go—without getting ready to go? Certainly not; yet they have gone for years whenever they liked, in the shiftless operas of the Italian school, without the least preparation. They would even come back before they went, if it were any more pleasing, pictorial, or

melodious. It took a heroic genius like that of Wagner to return to the simple, eternal truth of things. We have a striking example here of Wagner's power of modifying and inverting a motive, carrying it from key to key, giving it forwards and backwards, upside down and other-end-to, according to the feeling he wishes it to express, whether it be love, rage, desire, impatience, ardor, or what not. The "*Losgehen-lassen Motiv*" is simplicity itself when it first appears in C major (see motive). But Bluebeard's exits are many —partly because his entrances are so numerous—and for every exit this motive conveys a new meaning. Bluebeard is always getting ready to go, but with what different purposes in mind! He goes for pastime and for

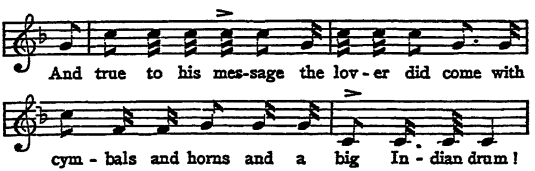
passion; he goes for wooing and for wantoning; for marriage and for murder. He goes in D sharp with pomp, pride, and power, and we can distinguish the tread of his servants' feet, the clatter of arms, and the hurrying together of his escort and retinue. He goes again in B flat minor, stealthily and unattended, the orchestra giving the motive with muted violins and subdued brass. We seem to hear naught but the soft pad-pad of his felt bedroom slippers on the marble steps, and we murmur to one another: "*What does he propose to do now?*"

We have next the "Dragon," "Elephant," and "Tiger" *motive:* the "Dragon Motive" being intentionally reminiscent of the one in "Siegfried."

BLUEBEARD

There is not in the entire range of modern music anything more impressive than this splendid journey of a barbaric prince toward his chosen victim. No stage picture could be more dazzling than the one brought before the mind's eye in the majestic, munificent measures that herald the pageant:

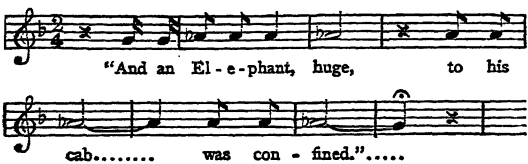
Aria



The measures that follow these describe the tiger swinging on behind the triumphal cab. This is a delicious whimsicality, and the music is as gay and sportive as anything in "Die Meistersinger."

BLUEBEARD

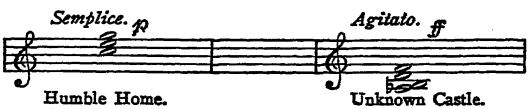
Aria



How the character of Bluebeard stands out in these passages—Bluebeard, morbid, erotic, megalophonous megalomaniac, with his grandiose air and outlandish accoutrements!

It seems odd that rumors of his matrimonial past had not reached Fatima, for the libretto tells us (authorized opera-house edition, not the one sold on the sidewalk) that his castle was only an hour's ride distant. In any event, one would think the sight of the lover's approach, with lions and elephants in attendance and a tiger hanging on

behind the chariot, might have shown Fatima that, although Bluebeard might be admirable as an advance agent for a menagerie, he would hardly be a pleasant fireside companion. However, it was the old story! Moved by love, ambition, poverty, *ennui*, or what not, Fatima lost her head, as all Bluebeard's previous wives had done, both before and after marriage, and left the humble home of her childhood for the unknown castle. Simple chords give us this information thus:



Then comes the "*Liebesgruss Motiv*" (Love's Greeting Motive). No single instrument can give this ex-

quisite theme. The whole symphony of human nature seems to rise and spread its wings in a glorious harmony of pairs and twos of a kind melting in passionate octaves and triplets. The groping, ardent, distracted, thwarted, but ever protesting bass, set against a coquettish, evasive, yet timidly yielding treble; the occasional introduction of a mysterious minor in the midst of a well-authenticated major, gives us an intimation that wooing is not an exact science.

Next come the "*Hochzeitsreise und Flitter Wochen Motive*" (The Bridal Tour and Honeymoon motives). Here are harp *glissandos*; here are voices soaring, voices roaring, voices darting, voices floating, weaving an audible embroidery of sound. They make up the

most exquisitely tender scene of the opera, and are especially interesting to us in America, since they are built upon one of our national songs. This can only be regarded as a flattering recognition of our support of German opera in this country.

ARIA

"Midst the treasures of his palaces,
dee-lighted to roam,
"Sister Anne with fair Fatima explored their new home!
"Home! Home! Sweet, sweet Home!
"There's no place like home when a maid's too poor to roam!"

It is later on in this act that we have the celebrated "Hope Motive," a marvelous series of tone-pictures so novel and sensational that many box-

holders are expected to drop in at ten-thirty for the excitement of this one brief scene. The motive wanders from key to key, hoping that in the end it will hit off the right one. Fatima is hoping to find her ideal in Bluebeard. Sister Anne is hoping to get a handsomer husband than Fatima's; Bluebeard is hoping that Sister Anne will be his eighth spouse, and hoping that there will be room to hang her in the hidden chamber, in which his deceased wives are already pressed for room. All this is reflected in the voices of the singers, together with many other emotions. They hope that they will be able to come in just enough after or enough before, the usual time of entrance, to rivet the conductor's attention; that they will be preserved from falling into one another's

parts; that they will not be drowned by the orchestra; that they will be able to mount the dizzying heights of a precipitous chromatic scale and manage an unrehearsed descent in fifths on the half-notes—something that always causes intense joy in an uneducated audience, especially when it is unsuccessful.

This scene runs the gamut of human emotion. The universe is mirrored in it. First, one of the themes which we have noted, and then another, is sounded, bringing to the hearer's mind all the crucial moments of Bluebeard's strange, perverted, wife-pursuing life, as well as all the aspirations and disappointments of Fatima's ambitious but checkered career. All the while that this complicated web of motives is being woven out of un-

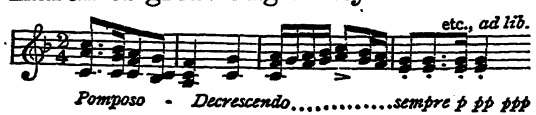
resolved dissonances, the thirty first violins keep on playing the same three notes in ever-precipitated rhythms. This is radical, audacious, and effective. The notes are G flat, A sharp, and B natural, and the world reels as we hear them. Everything is ours in this scene—orchestration, vocalization, dramatization, characterization, gesticulation, auditory inflammation, cacophonation, demoralization, adumbration.

There is an abrupt change of key after the "Honeymoon Motive" from sweetest major to a piercing minor. This is exquisitely sincere and symbolic, though it is a point too delicate to be perceived save by musicians who have married but have not been able to hang up their wives.

The libretto goes on to say:

"*The honeymoon passed when a letter one day*
"*Upon urgent affairs called Lord Bluebeard away—*
"'*To inspection, sweet love, all my castle I leave,*
"*But remember with this key be on the* qui vive!
"*It is not a natural key—think of that!*
"*My sword's in the key of one sharp, and that's flat!*'
"(*Then he half drew his blade, and it was sharp and flat.*)"

From this point the music-drama hastens tragically to a close. We have Bluebeard's sudden (and feigned) journey, introduced by a pompous march of great originality:



Then we have the fatal curiosity of Fatima and her sister Anne. We must extenuate here, nor aught set down in malice, remembering that Wagner knew only the women of his own day, before the sex was uplifted and purified by the vote, and he naturally depicted them with the man-engendered vices that were then a part of their unhappy heritage. This "*Neugirde Motiv*" (Curiosity Motive) is made up of agitated, sharply accentuated sixteenth notes played with incredible vivacity and culminating in a terrifying orchestral crash where entrance is made into the hidden chamber, with its famous tableau so eloquent of the polygamous instinct of man; an instinct only kept in subjection by the most stringent laws and the most militant domestic discipline.

BLUEBEARD

Anti-Feminist Aria

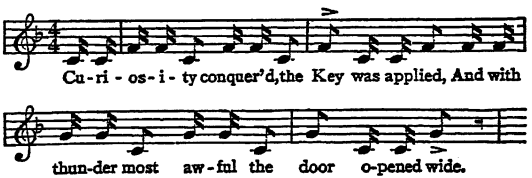
"But Fatima said, 'To the keyhole let's creep,
"There can be no harm just in one little peep!
"We are women—besides, there are none to behold us!
"If he wished us to leave it, he shouldn't have told us!'"

It is these inexcusable lines which have caused the Feminist party to boycott (and perhaps rightly) any opera-house in which this drama is given, urging that they contain an insult which can be wiped out only with blood or ballots. I sympathize with this feeling, yet, as I said before, there are extenuating circumstances. Wagner was born a hundred years ago. In his time the hand of woman, though

white, was flabby and inert from years of darning, patching, stirring the pot, buttoning and unbuttoning, feeding and spanking man's perennial progeny. He had no conception how that frail hand would be steadied and strengthened by dropping the ballot into the box; how curiosity, vanity, parasitic coquetry, lack of logic, overweening interest in millinery and inability to balance a check-book—how these weaknesses would vanish under the inspiring influences of municipal politics; therefore I feel disposed to forgive him, and to attribute to him, not absolute and deliberate insult, so much as a kind of patronizing persiflage. In this case, however, feminists will say that the great Wagner undoubtedly and regrettably overreached himself.

Here is just a hint of the theme; a paltry, parasitic, mid-Victorian motive.

Curiosity Aria

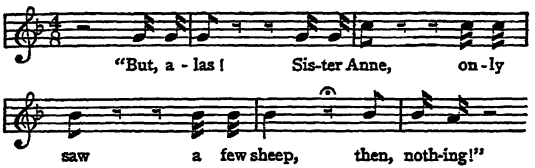


Now comes the much discussed "Chorus of Headless Wives," which is a distinct prophecy of Debussy. You have noted in late musical criticisms allusions to the "ghosts of themes" used in "Pelleas and Mélisande," — "Sound-wraiths wandering in air." Here we have the same thing and employed with exquisite appropriateness. The ladies hanging in the secret chamber are mere bodies, their heads being decid-

edly off stage. When the door is opened the wives begin to sing *à la* Debussy, the ghostly effect being secured by the fact that it is not, of course, the *present bodies*, but the *absent heads* that are supposed to be singing. The melodic wraiths float from the key of G flat—I use "key" in the old-fashioned sense, for the word, like the thing itself, is fast disappearing—through one and four sharps back to two and three flats, employing all signatures but that of C major. Six sets of severed vocal organs meandering in space would hardly use the natural key!

Then we have the opening of the mysterious door; the unexpected return of Bluebeard; the hysterics of the ill-fated sisters, with plenty of shrieking and swooning motives; and

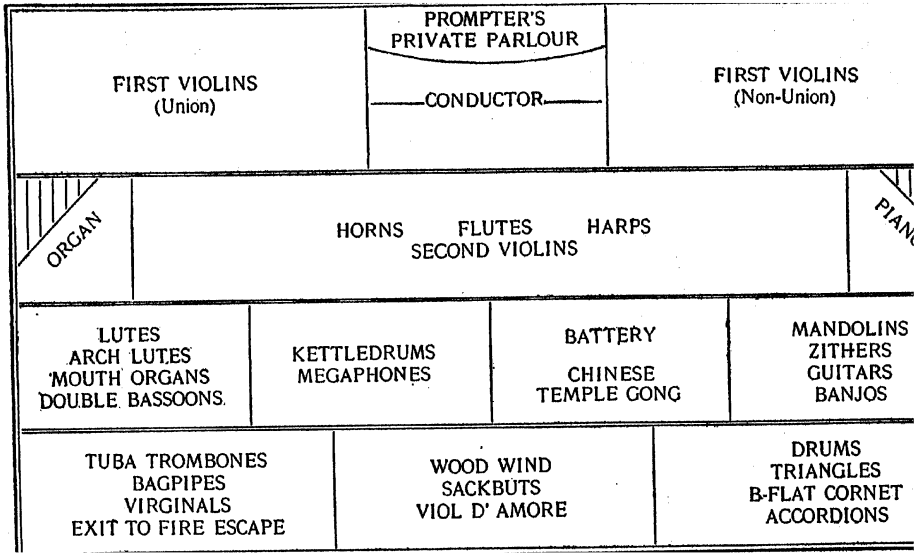
then the celebrated "*Hammelfleisch*" or "Mutton" motive, where Sister Anne, from her post in the high tower, observes for a long time nothing but sheep.



Now there is the thrilling and opportune arrival of the Brothers on their high horses; the mortal combat; the death of the villain by the "*Schwert Motiv*"; the joyous funeral march; and then the superb duet between Mustapha, the eldest brother, and Fatima, the ill-fated heroine. We get astonishing color contrasts in the last scene, as each character is allotted a different set of

instruments as accompaniment. Bluebeard has six sackbuts, a trumpet, a *viol d'amore*, and a Chinese temple gong; Fatima, three lutes, an archlute, and a pianola; Mustapha a bass-drum and a harpsichord; and Sister Anne a pair of virginals. (An exquisite touch, this!) To Bluebeard's servants are allotted barrel-organs, accordions, jews'-harps, mandolins, bagpipes, and triangles. All this gives a tonal splendor that simply beggars description.

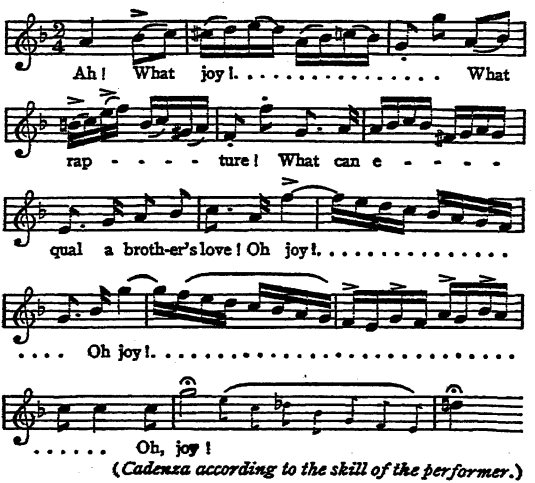
When the combat is over and Bluebeard's immense body is prone and lifeless in the dust, Wagner suddenly leaves tragedy and gives us a melodious duet between the brother and sister on the theme: "What can equal a brother's love?" This duet and *finale* unite to form a master-


PROMPTER'S
PRIVATE PARLOUR
CONDUCTOR
FIRST VIOLINS
(Union)
FIRST VIOLINS
(Non-Union)
ORGAN
HORNS FLUTES HARPS
SECOND VIOLINS
PIANO
LUTES
ARCH LUTES
MOUTH ORGANS
DOUBLE BASSOONS
KETTLEDRUMS
MEGAPHONES
BATTERY
CHINESE
TEMPLE GONG
MANDOLINS
ZITHERS
GUITARS
BANJOS
TUBA TROMBONES
BAGPIPES
VIRGINALS
EXIT TO FIRE ESCAPE
WOOD WIND
SACKBUTS
VIOL D' AMORE
DRUMS
TRIANGLES
B-FLAT CORNET
ACCORDIONS

piece; a deserved rebuke to any cynic who may consider that Wagner could not adopt the enervating methods of the Italian school if he desired. His cadenzas here are miracles of compressed technique, and, although the melody is conventional, the music itself is never for a moment simple or intelligible.

Fatima, singing actress (whose part here is written almost entirely in appogiaturas), and Mustapha, baritone, hold the stage; the one who draws the largest salary occupying the center and the other standing wherever he can find room. Mustapha, taking care to descend as low in his scale as Fatima ascends high in hers, and vying with her in exceeding the speed-limit, sings "Oh ra-ha-ha-hapture!" several times, varied by "What

can e-he-he-he-qual a brother's love?" Then, using the same words, they sing as much as possible in unison to the end of the scene, which closes with a fantasy of capricious arabesques and a series of trills on notes seldom heard from any but the highest-priced human lips.



(*Cadenza according to the skill of the performer.*)

Whether Wagner followed the Italian school in this case in sarcasm, or because he believed it was fitting, considering the subject, can never be known (though we remember that he was at one time a great admirer of Bellini); but the result is a melodious and restful ending to a tragedy which, were it carried to the end in unbroken gloom, mystery, and carnage, would be too terrible and too vast for human endurance and human comprehension. Yet let us be just! The libretto is full of barbaric brutalities; it is replete with blood and carnage; but, although Bluebeard was emphatically not a nice person, and his vices cannot be condoned, and although Fatima was wrong in marrying for an establishment and most culpable in yielding to her curiosity,

still, virtue triumphs in the end. The story, as a whole, is fairly murmurous with morality, sending young men and women to their homes impressed with the risks and snares involved in bigamy and polygamy, and giving them an added sense of the security and gravity of the marriage tie when sparingly used.

THE END